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A Bimonthly
Indiana NRCS Newsletter

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Issue 52

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Heart to Heart with Hardisty

The 2014 Indiana State Fair has come to an end, and I want to thank all of our volunteers who worked at Pathway to Water Quality and at the DuPont Food Pavilion. With over 950,000 people attending the Fair this year, many fairgoers walked through both areas and viewed our exhibits. This gave us an incredible opportunity to let them know what we do as an agency and conservation partnership, and to show some of the conservation practices that we help landowners implement. I know workdays were long but you truly made a difference in making both of these areas top exhibits at the State Fair.



Jane Hardisty
State Conservationist

By now, many of you may have heard about the algae bloom issues occurring within the Western Lake Erie basin. NRCS is working diligently to address this issue by targeting funding to this area through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) under EQIP. Farmers stand prepared to get conservation practices on the ground and the funding available will help make that happen. Many thanks to the district conservationists in the Western Lake Erie Basin, as well as the area staff and programs and public affairs staffs for tackling this issue.

I'm so proud to see Indiana NRCS employees continue to go above and beyond expectations. While we didn't get information on the new Farm Bill until almost three-fourths of the way through the year, our staff has still managed to get our Farm Bill dollars obligated in a timely manner. We've been successful thanks to all of the hard work you've dedicated to putting conservation on the ground. As we get close to closing out fiscal year 2014, I want to encourage NRCS employees to continue to meet your conservation goals and help people help the land.

As we enter FY15, I anticipate more challenges and opportunities for our NRCS family. Nationally we are seeing a surge in implementation efforts getting closer for the Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative (CDSI) and Administrative Transformation. I expect these shifts will make FY15 even more productive to continue carrying out our mission of Helping People Help the Land.

Jane E. Hardisty

**** * * Employee Spotlight * * * ***

Cara Bergschneider, Monroe and Brown County District Conservationist

Q: As one of our newest employees, please help us get to know you better.

I grew up outside of Springfield, Illinois on a hobby farm where we raised sheep, hay, and large gardens. My dad came from a farming family so I enjoyed spending summers on the 'big' farm with my cousins. I started college at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale but transferred to Virginia Tech after thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail with my now husband, Devin. At Virginia Tech I finished my undergraduate degree in Environmental Sciences and it was there I discovered and fell in love with soil. I completed my Masters degree in soil science with an emphasis on hydric soils. I am so very fortunate to have married my best friend and partner, Devin. We have two children, Shawnee, 10 and Trillium, 9. I treasure my family more than anything else. Devin homeschools the kids and they are excited about the supportive homeschool community in Bloomington.



Cara, third from right, and family and friends pose together after pulling the plastic off their high tunnel.

Q: Before coming to Indiana NRCS, what did you do?

I started my career with NRCS as a soil scientist on the soil survey team in the Adirondacks of New York. My, how I loved that job! But family ties pulled me and my husband back to the Midwest. I left NRCS and accepted a geoscientist position with a small private company in Carbondale, Illinois in order to be closer to family. There, I worked on a multitude of projects from stream bank stabilization and wetland restoration to education to selling stream models. It was a dynamic position but I missed working in the public service capacity and came back to NRCS as a Soil Conservationist in 2009. I was stationed in Mt. Vernon, Illinois but worked throughout the southern Illinois region.

Q: How did your past work experience prepare you for your current position with NRCS?

Because of my background in soil science I am always asking myself how the soil will affect the proposed conservation practice and vice versa. My experience as a vegetable grower has proven that when you care for and feed the soil ecosystem it translates directly to healthier, stronger plants.

Q: What are you looking forward to most in your position?

Working with the diverse populations and farming operations in Brown and Monroe counties! I love working

with small scale niche producers who are part of the local economy. I look forward to the mutual sharing of knowledge with the specialty crop community.

Q: Do you have any professional or personal goals for 2014?

Professionally, my goal in 2014 is to share and promote the concepts of regenerative agriculture. Equally important is my other main goal of building positive, open, trusting relationships with the agriculture community in Brown and Monroe counties. Hopefully we will start a new farming venture in the Bloomington area in 2014 (or soon after!). My goal is for our next farming operation to be based on permaculture principles, so I am

expanding my knowledge base on the subject. I am also studying medicinal herb formulations. In 2014, I hope to expand the types of herbal tinctures I create for my family and friends.

Q: I understand you and your family have an organic operation. Can you tell us a little bit about it?

My husband and I operate Roundabout Farm, a small organic vegetable farm, with my in-laws, Thom and Terri Brown in southern Illinois. We started out as garlic growers but over the years have expanded into peppers, leeks, potatoes and winter squash. We also have a high tunnel which has helped tremendously in lengthening our growing season and allowing us to more intensively manage specialty crops. We primarily sold to the local natural foods co-op throughout the year and the farmers market during the winter months. A good portion of our garlic crop was sold as seed garlic to other local producers. Our plan is to purchase land in the Bloomington area and move the farming operation (parents included!).

Q: What else do you do in your spare time when you're not working for NRCS?

Spending time with my family is my number one priority outside of work. We spend a lot of our time together working on the farm. In our free time we love hiking, camping, canoeing, and exploring the natural world. In the evenings there is nothing I love more than working with the kids in the flower gardens. We are looking forward to transplanting our medicinal and culinary herbs, natives, and flowers for drying to a new home!

Hoosier Happenings

KUDOS TO:

Kelley Barkell, District Conservationist, Tim Bomba, District Conservationist, and Andrew Pursifull, Agricultural Engineer and the whole Indiana NRCS staff: I just want to let you know how much I enjoyed working in partnership with the NRCS. I loved every moment I worked for the state and alongside NRCS. I will miss working with everyone and helping landowners with all their conservation issues. I do not think could have worked with two better people than Kelley and Tim. They were such a joy to work with and taught me so much during my time here. I do not have enough words to describe how much I appreciate what they do and how much they helped me out. I would also like to mention how much Andrew helped me out during my time here. If I needed help with anything, he was more than willing to give me a hand. Whether it was engineering questions, help with landowners, or anything else, he was a huge help for me. - **Nathan Houk, Indiana State Department of Agriculture**

Derek Thompson, District Conservationist, for giving an excellent presentation on Soil Health to the Steuben Key Bank Women's group. Derek gave an excellent soil health demonstration, completing the infiltration test and the slake test. The group was a non-traditional audience and Derek did a great job explaining soil health in a way the group could easily understand. Derek's presentation generated several good questions, and his responses really sold the purpose of soil health.— **Brian Musser, District Conservationist**

Dan Davis, Resource Management Specialist, Jeremy Palmer, Soil Conservationist, and Derek Thompson, District Conservationist, for the refresher course on toolkit and protracts. It was really good information for me to see and you all are obviously experts. I plan to forward information and suggestions on expediting the enhancements to the Chief and others. I look forward to the information Dan is preparing for me on the list of "glitches" and suggested enhancements and their priority. Thanks again, the time and effort you guys are taking will (in the long run) be the right route. That is why Indiana has the high level of integrity and the best employees.— **Jane Hardisty, State Conservationist**

Derek Thompson, District Conservationist and Scot Haley, Area Resource Soil Scientist for their quick action to set up a USDA film shoot to share the good things farmers are doing in the Western Lake Erie basin. - **Becky Fletcher, State Public Affairs Specialist**

Don Donovan, District Conservationist, for being asked to speak at the Illinois Association of Conservation Districts meeting along with CCSI members to about Indiana's soil health success. - **Jane Hardisty, State Conservationist**

INDIANA NRCS' CREAM OF THE CROP

Indiana NRCS employees do more than just support Indiana! They also support National Headquarters on details and pilot teams and as advisors. Over the last month, the following employees have been involved in national projects:

- ◇ Jill Reinhart—National RCPP Review Team and National RCPP APF Team
- ◇ Mike Cox—National Emergency Watershed Protection Matrix Team
- ◇ Barry Fisher—Soil Health Presenter in South Africa

SOIL HEALTH CAMPAIGN RECEIVES ANOTHER COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

The *Conference on Ecological and Ecosystem Restoration (CEER)* recently presented its 2014 Communications Award to NRCS in recognition of its *Unlock the Secrets in the Soil* campaign. "This campaign is an exemplary model of an effective public outreach and education effort, and stands to offer valuable insights for other natural resource managers seeking innovative strategies for communicating with stakeholders and raising awareness about critical conservation issues," said CEER awards committee chair Rob Daoust. "Not only does the campaign employ a range of communications tactics targeting different audiences, but it distills scientific knowledge about soils into language that is easily understood by a non-technical reader. Improving the health of the nation's soil is among the most important conservation endeavors of our time, and the USDA-NRCS continues to show great leadership in this area," he said.



CEER's 2014 Communications Award

CEER is a collaborative effort between the leaders of the National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (NCER) and the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER). It brings together ecological and ecosystem restoration scientists, engineers, policy makers, planners, NGOs and stakeholders to address challenges and share information about restoration projects, programs and research from across North America.

Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

INDIANA NRCS ATTENDS 2014 OUTFEST

Submitted by Tandy Easler, SEPM—Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender



Left to right: Arelys Ortiz, James Rodriguez and Curtis Knueven

NRCS employees Mark Eastman, District Conservationist, Curtis Knueven, Resource Management Specialist, James Rodriguez, Soil Conservationist, and Arelys Ortiz,

Intern, set up a recruiting information booth at the local lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) OUTFest in Lafayette, Indiana on Saturday, August 1st. This was the third time NRCS has attended this growing festival. Approximately one hundred people came through the booth inquiring about NRCS, volunteer opportunities and federal employment. Information about the Earth Team Volunteer Program, usajobs.gov website, careers in natural resources, educational requirements, same-sex partner benefits with federal employment, and the history of LGBT inclusion in USDA were distributed to interested attendees.

“The best thing about this event is people are starting to notice that NRCS supports equality, and this gives them confidence to come to us, either to ask for job opportunities and know us better or work with us to put more conservation on the ground,” said Tandy Easler, LGBT Special Program Emphasis Manager.

Easler also said there were a lot of people excited to see NRCS present at this type of event and many sincere interests in future employment with NRCS or federal government. The staff enjoyed talking with such a diverse and upbeat crowd of people while listening to good music and tasting delicious food.

For information about OUTFest or the LGBT program, contact Tandy Easler, LGBT Program Manager at tandy.easler@in.usda.gov or visit the Indiana NRCS website at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/in/about/outreach/sep/?cid=nrcs144p2_031113.

NORTHWEST AREA SUPPORTS HUNGER PROGRAM

Submitted by Becky Ross, Area Conservationist

The Northwest Area staff came together on July 29th to package over 1,100 meals that will be distributed world wide through the “Kids Against Hunger” campaign. Each package has six servings that contains a specially designed mix of nutrients, soy protein, vegetables, and rice. Employees also donated almost \$400 dollars to help pay for the cost of the food supplies and shipping. It was a fun afternoon that demonstrated the passion our employees have for helping others. The packages were assembled in less than one hour and packed in boxes decorated with Conservation, Farming and Environmental themes hand drawn by our own staff.

The staff also brought in donations to be sent to the Food Finders shelter in Lafayette through USDA’s “Feds Feed Families” campaign and they will also donate a large of hygiene supplies to the Lafayette Urban Ministries Shelter.

It was a great afternoon of fellowship as well as a much needed break from the trials of Toolkit! I am so proud of the people in the area for coming together for this cause. I owe a huge thank you to Susannah Hinds, Area Grazing Specialist, for working with the staff at “Kids Against Hunger” to set up this service project.



Northwest Area Staff assist in the 2014 Kids Against Hungry campaign during their July area meeting.

Partnership Links

IN Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Bi-Weekly

Updates: www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html

IN Conservation Partnership: <http://icp.iaswcd.org>

IN Dept. of Environmental Management: www.in.gov/idem

IN Dept. of Natural Resources: www.in.gov/dnr

IN State Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation:
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue University: www.purdue.edu

USDA Farm Service Agency: www.fsa.usda.gov

Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS WITH NRCS!

Do you remember 1974? Were you already working in your chosen career? Attending grade school, high school or college? Were you even born yet?

Forty years ago we had no microwave ovens, cell phones, internet, GPS, computers, answering machines, fax machines, DVDs, frozen yogurt, Starbucks, or Mp3 players, but..... we had Jane Hardisty!

In 1974, Indiana Soil Conservation Service had never hired a woman and Jane Hardisty became the first. The first female in a long line of positions – first soil conservationist, first district conservationist, first resource conservation and development coordinator, first area conservationist, first assistant state conservationist, and yes, the first state conservationist. As the first female in these positions, Jane has paved the way for women seeking a career in agriculture and conservation.

Jane left Indiana for a short time to serve as Michigan State Conservationist in the late nineties, but returned in 2000 where she has served as Indiana's state conservationist for the past fourteen years.

Jane has been called on to provide leadership at NRCS headquarters over the years, and has served as the acting director of the National Employee Development Division, the Watershed and Wetlands Division, the Chief for the Central Region. Most recently she was appointed to serve as the agency's Acting Deputy Chief for Management and Acting Associate Chief for Operations. She has also served on numerous workgroups throughout the years. In 2005 she was selected to represent the agency at the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation.



Jane served as District Conservationist for Miami County from 1978-1982

Many may not realize that Jane was a key player in blazing the way for the nationwide soil health movement. She traveled to Washington, DC on numerous occasions to make soil health presentations to the nation's conservation leaders. In 2011, she was appointed to serve as the first chair of the National Soil Health Team. She continues to do a lot of work behind the scenes to make soil health a part of our everyday work in the agency.

Jane has spent the last few years focused on building a stronger more technically responsive workforce through leadership development and mentoring opportunities and the establishment of area conservation technical delivery teams. Because of Jane's leadership and vision, Indiana has been recognized as a national leader and role model for an effective conservation partnership, seamlessly working together to deliver high quality direct assistance to private landowners.

Congratulations Jane on your 40th Anniversary with the Natural Resources Conservation Service!

MENTORING PROGRAM CELEBRATION

The 2013-14 Indiana Mentoring Program protégés and mentors celebrated on August 20th with the Leadership Team. Jane opened the ceremony by recognizing the protégés Hilary Barnhart, Jeff Cannaday, Randy Dickson, Cindy Johnston, Curtis Knueven, Randy Van Matre, Brian Musser, and Celia Tharp on completing the mentoring program and for being willing to invest in themselves and learn from more experienced advisors. She also thanked the mentors Kimberly Neumann, Darrell Nicholson, Ben Lambeck, David Hines, Tammy Swihart, Beth Clarizia, Roger Kult, Theresa Wojkovich, Andy Ertel, and Doris Scully who volunteered their time and shared their insight to help these employees progress toward their career and personal goals. Mentors and protégés were invited to share their experiences with the group and also to give input into making the program better for the future. Jane also thanked Susan Meadows and Jill Reinhart for their leadership of the program. The next Mentoring Program will begin in October.

WOMEN'S LEARNING CIRCLES WELL RECEIVED

Last year, Indiana NRCS worked with AFT and the Women Food and Ag Network (WFAN), Iowa State Extension, and SWCDs to host two pilot Women's Learning Circles (Hendricks and Howard Counties). These meetings are primarily for women who are landowners, but many are farmers as well. These women have strong conservation values and want their land farmed sustainably, but they often have had no contact with us and have no idea the resources available to them.

WFAN and Iowa State have received a CIG grant to expand the geographic area of the Learning Circles and also to incorporate soil health information. They are planning to do 21 learning circles a year over three years. Three meetings were recently held here in the state in Hendricks/Marion, Boone, and Howard/Clinton Counties. Over the next two years, we will host six more meetings—three meetings each year.

We are pleased to report that AFT has recently received a Nina Mason Pulliam Grant that will allow us to do an additional ten meetings in 2015 and 2016 here in Indiana. The Learning Circle concept is a proven method of reaching this nontraditional audience and we are excited to be a part of it.



Brandy Daggett, District Conservationist, teaches women about soil profiles.

Special thanks go to Brandy Daggett, Kerry Smith, Angie Garrison, Jerod Chew, and Jamie Shonkwiler, along with the Boone, Hendricks, Howard, and Clinton County SWCD staff for their great helping in planning the meetings and tours. If you have questions about the Learning Circles, contact Jill Reinhart, Brianne Lowe, or Becky Fletcher.

Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

DIVERSITY DAY A

SUCCESS

*Submitted by Evan Smith,
SEPM—Veterans and Disability*

I want to send a sincere thank you to everyone who was able to attend Diversity Day! I had a great time and appreciate everyone making the day so enjoyable. It was a pleasure having the opportunity to show everyone a small piece of what the military is all about. I believe everyone came away with a little bit more knowledge about veterans and those with disabilities. The CRAC team did an excellent job supporting and helping prepare for Diversity Day and the Camp Atterbury staff helped make the day possible. It was amazing to be able to watch a few of our veterans manning a weapon system and seeing how much fun they had. You could easily pick most of them out of the crowd and seeing their enjoyment made the day all worthwhile. At the end of the day I walked away with a smile on my face and was even more grateful to work for such an amazing organization that allows us to have days like these. In addition, I believe Jane would have torn the roof off of the EST Weapon Simulator building if she could have while running that massive .50 caliber machine gun. Thank you all for an amazing day!



Spectators watch as fellow NRCS employees experience a 360 degree roll in a simulated military vehicle.



Evan Smith, SEPM for Veterans and the Disabled, discusses the plans for the day.



Left to Right: Tony Branam, Eamonn Ertel, Rob Miller, Doris Scully, Jennifer Kipper, Mark Cambron, Daniel Phillips, Eddy Adams, Dario Lee and Cindy Johnston



Captain Cates instructs attendees on how to properly use the weapons training system.



Mary Jo Woodruff and Jerry Roach test the .50 caliber machine gun weapons simulator.



An instructor makes sure NRCS employees are safe in the military vehicle rollover simulation.



Chris Shoults takes target practice during the 2014 Diversity Day event.



State Conservationist, Jane Hardisty, takes charge of the .50 caliber machine gun.

PERSONNEL UPDATE

SELECTIONS FOR VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Stephen Roecker selected for the Soil Scientist (GIS Specialist) position on the MLRA Region 11 Office effective 07-28-14

Jessica Harig selected for the District Conservationist position at the Mount Vernon Field Office effective 10-19-14

Brian Kruse selected for the State Forester position on the Technology Staff effective 10-19-14

Kerry Nielsen selected for the District Conservationist position at the Delphi Field Office effective 10-19-14

Matt Jarvis selected for the District Conservationist position at the Aurora Field Office effective 10-19-14

RETIREMENTS

Joe O'Donnell, District Conservationist, at the Delphi Field Office effective 06-30-14

Bill Moran, District Conservationist, at the Valparaiso Field Office effective 09-03-14

Historical Photo of the Issue



As the Public Affairs staff continues to sort through filing cabinets of old photos to archive, we thought it would be fun to share some of our favorites and the descriptions that were included with each photo.

DATE: July 16, 1969

LOCATION: Wabash Watershed

TITLE: Crops—Management Practices

DESCRIPTION: Comparison of corn planted by conventional method and planted by no-till method in old corn stalks. Corn was planted on same day. The soil is a “clay bank.” Left: No-till, Right: Conventional tillage

Mark Your Calendar

September

- 9: State Technical Committee Meeting
- 10: Southeast Area Meeting
- 12: DEADLINE—CSP Renewal application in PT
DEADLINE—CSP 10-1 EXP MODs
2014 Fall Tour Indiana Assn of Professional Soil Classifiers
- 16: Area Conservationist Meeting
- 17: Leadership Team Meeting
- 21-27: National Forest Week
- 24: Southwest Area Meeting
- 25: FOTG Meeting
- 30: Northwest Area Meeting



October

- 1-31: National Pork Month
Disability Month
- 1: SAC/FAC Meeting
- 7: Northeast Area Meeting
- 21: Indiana Conservation Partnership Leaders Meeting
- 29: Leadership Team Retreat
- 30-31: Mentor Program Orientation

November

- 1-30: Native American Heritage Month
- 5-7: Conservation Selling Skills
- 5: SAC/FAC Meeting
- 12: Hoosier Chapter SWCS Fall Meeting, Ball State

You can find up-to-date information about upcoming events on the Indiana SharePoint site at:
<https://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/central/in/Lists/Calendar/calendar.aspx>